

STAT

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2011/11/18 : CIA-RDP89G00720R000600730014-0

Page Denied

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2011/11/18 : CIA-RDP89G00720R000600730014-0

Force successfully tested its anti-satellite weapon yesterday even though the test remained within restrictions imposed by Congress, the service announced.

The anti-satellite, or ASAT, test used the energy source of a distant star as the target, the Air Force said.

The test was conducted by a high-flying F-15 jet from Edwards Air Force Base, Calif.

It was the fourth test of the weapon, which sits at the end of a small, two-stage rocket carried aloft by the fighter. After the plane fires the weapon, the ASAT is supposed to slam into its target at high speed.

Last year, congressional arms control advocates succeeded in winning enactment of a ban on tests of the ASAT weapon against a target in space. That ban, which extends through the fiscal year ending Sept. 30, came after the U.S. ASAT suc-

cessful test. The House-Senate conference committee will try next month to iron out differences between the two bills. President Reagan has threatened to veto any final version of the bill if it contains the ASAT test ban or four other amendments added in the House by arms control advocates.

The Air Force said yesterday's test provided data on the ability of the weapon's sensor to track an infrared heat source closer to the Earth's horizon than previous tests.

The test was the fourth in which the ASAT weapon was actually fired and comes in the wake of 35 other demonstrations in which the weapon was simply carried aloft by the F-15.

The three previous tests involved

source" in space, along with three tests against targets in fiscal 1987. Those tests would be blocked if the House ban is enacted into law.

Mr. Reagan and the Pentagon argue that the U.S. weapon, which has been in development for eight years, is needed to offset what they say is an operational Soviet ASAT weapon and force the Kremlin to bargain seriously for a ban on ASAT weapons.

But opponents contend that the Soviets have not tested their weapon since 1982 and that it is far more crude than its U.S. counterpart and thus would not make an effective weapon.

Both superpowers depend heavily on satellites for spying, communications and early warning of nuclear attack.

NEW YORK TIMES

24 August 1986

Pg. 18

U.S. Aides Report Soviet Lost Airborne Laser Lab in a Fire

By MICHAEL R. GORDON

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 23 — Reagan Administration officials said today that a fire destroyed a Soviet airborne laser laboratory near Moscow in late May or early June.

The laboratory was in an Ilyushin 76 transport plane, and the fire occurred while the plane was on the ground at an air base, the officials said.

Central Intelligence Agency analysts are said to have told the Government that some Soviet officials involved in the laser program are believed to have been injured or killed in the fire.

Reports about the fire have appeared in Defense Daily, a Washington-based newsletter, and in International Defense Review, a Geneva magazine.

Varying Views on Significance

One official said the accident was a setback for the airborne laser pro-

gram, but other officials and experts outside of Government cautioned against exaggerating the significance.

A 1985 version of the Pentagon report titled "Soviet Military Power" says that the Russians have been working on an airborne laser, but that it is not clear how successful this effort will be.

"Assuming a successful development effort, limited initial deployment could begin in the early 1990's," the report says, adding that such a system could be used for defense against cruise missiles and to defend Soviet planes against attack. It also suggests that a laser system could eventually be used to attack satellites.

The United States Air Force used to have an airborne laser laboratory in a Boeing KC-135. But that program was canceled several years ago because of

cost and doubts about its military utility.

The Americans used their laboratory to test the ability of a medium-range laser against air-to-air missiles.

"It was canceled before the 'Star Wars' program got under way because they could not find a military application for it," said John E. Pike, an associate director for space policy at the Federation of American Scientists.

Mr. Pike noted that the United States and the Soviet Union were both working on ground-based lasers that are more powerful than those in planes.

The United States' ground-based laser has two million watts of power, and the airborne laser had the power of 400,000 watts.

Before the program was canceled, the United States had one airborne laboratory, and it is presumed that the Soviet Union also had only one such laboratory.